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ACTION ORM-02

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 IO-13 ISO-00 DHA-02 AID-05 CIAE-00
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USIA-06 PRS-01 /066.W

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R 202017Z JUL 76
FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6408
INFO AMEMBASSY ASUNCION
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
USMISSION GENEVA

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)
U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS
Margaret P. Grafeld, Director
(☒ Release) (☐ Excise) (☐ Deny)
Exemption(s):

Declassify: (☐ In Part) (☒ In Full)
(☐ Classify as) (☐ Extend as) (☐ Downgrade to)
Date Declassify on Reason

[REDACTED] BUENOS AIRES 4740

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, SHUM, AR, UN
SUBJECT: SITUATION OF REFUGEES WORSENS

REF: STATE 162271

1. SUMMARY. SITUATION OF POLITICAL REFUGESS IN ARGENTINA CONTINUES TO WORSEN WITH LAST WEEK'S DISAPPEARANCE OF 30 URUGUAYANS, INCLUDING DAUGHTER OF MURDERED URUGUAYAN SENATOR MICHELINI. REFUGEE COMMUNITY IS TERRIFIED, ACCORDING TO THE JNHCR OFFICIAL, WHO SAID THE NUMBER OF "DESPERATE CASES" REQUIRING IMMEDIATE RESETTLEMENT NOW FAR SURPASSES THE 1000 ORIGINALLY ANNOUNCED BY THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES AGA KHAN IN HIS APPEAL TO THE US AND 33 OTHER GOVERNMENTS IN LATE JUNE (REFTEL).

2. PLIGHT OF POLITICAL REFUGEES IN ARGENTINA HAS WORSENED CONSIDERABLY IN RECENT WEEKS, AND THEIR TERROR HAS REACHED THE STAGE OF PSYCHOSIS, UNHCR DIRECTOR TOLD EMBOFF MONDAY (JULY 19). BA HERALD REPORTED AND UNHCR ACKNOWLEDGED THAT ABOUT 30 URUGUAYAN EXILES IN BUENOS AIRES HAVE BEEN MISSING

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FROM THEIR HOMES SINCE LAST TUESDAY, (JULY 13), INCLUDING MARGARITA MICHELINI--DAUGHTER OF THE SLAIN URUGUAYAN SENATOR ZELMAR MICHELINI--HER HUSBAND, PEDRO ALTUNA; INES QUADROS, DAUGHTER OF URUGUAY'S FORMER AMBASSADOR TO WEST GERMANY; AND JOSE FELIX DIAZ, HUSBAND OF THE WOMAN RECENTLY SNATCHED FROM THE VENEZUELAN EMBASSY IN MONTEVIDEO.

3. LAST WEEK (JULY 12) THREE EXILES--TWO CHILEANS AND AN URUGUAYAN--WERE ABDUCTED AFTER LEAVING UNHCR OFFICES, WERE BEATEN AND FREED TWO DAYS LATER. THE THREE HAD GONE TO UNHCR OFFICE TO PICK UP MEDICINES FOR SOME 50 URUGUAYAN AND CHILEAN REFUGEES ON A HUNGER STRIKE TO PUBLICIZE THEIR APPEAL FOR RESETTLEMENT OPPORTUNITIES OUTSIDE ARGENTINA. THE HUNGER STRIKE ENDED SATURDAY (JULY 17). (UNHCR DIRECTOR ANNOUNCED TO THE PRESS JULY 13 THAT IF THE THREE DIDN'T REPEAR WITHIN 48 HOURS, HE WOULD FILE A PETITION OF HABEAS CORPUS. UNHCR HAS MADE NO STATEMENT YET CONCERNING THE ALLEGED DISAPPEARANCE OF THE 30 OTHER URUGUAYAN EXILES.)

4. UNHCR SOURCE SAID THAT ALTHOUGH CANADA HAS AGREED TO TAKE IN UP TO 1000 POLITICAL EXILES THROUGH ITS IMMIGRATION PROGRAM, THE UK 70, AND FRANCE CONTINUES TO ACCEPT SPECIAL CASES (SEE SEPTEL ON MARIO MUNOZ SALAS), THE NUMBER OF "DESPERATE CASES" HAS GONE FAR BEYOND THE 1000 ORIGINALLY ANNOUNCED IN UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES AGA KHAN'S APPEAL TO THE US AND 33 OTHER GOVERNMENTS IN LATE JUNE (REFTEL). "THE SITUATION HAS CHANGED COMPLETELY IN THE LAST THREE WEEKS," UNHCR DIRECTOR TOLD EMBOFFS. "IF BEFORE WE SAID 1000, TODAY THEY MUST ALL GO. NO REFUGEE CONSIDERS HIMSELF SAFE HERE ANY LONGER."

5. NUMBER OF EXILES SEEKING UN PROTECTION INCREASES DAILY, SOURCE REPORTED. MANY HUNDREDS HAVE COME IN SINCE THE URUGUAYAN POLITICIANS' MURDER IN LATE MAY AND THE ABDUCTION AND TORTURE OF 25 REFUGEES FROM A UNHCR-SPONSORED HOTEL IN MID JUNE. SOURCE SAID HE HAS REPORTS THAT ARGENTINE EMPLOYERS, PARTICULARLY IN BAHIA BLANCA AND OTHER PROVINCIAL TOWNS, ARE FIRING THEIR REFUGEE EMPLOYEES, APOLOGETICALLY EXPLAINING IT IS "TOO DANGEROUS" TO BE ASSOCIATED WITH REFUGEES. THIS INCREASES THE REFUGEES' DESPERATION AND DETERMINATION TO LEAVE.

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6. SOURCE SAID THAT ALTHOUGH HE HAS UNSUCCESSFULLY TRIED TO PERSUADE ARGENTINE OFFICIALS TO ACCELERATE REGULARIZATION OF THE STATUS OF MANY THOUSANDS OF ALIENS WHO PREVIOUSLY CONSIDERED REMAINING IN ARGENTINA, NOW IT MAKES NO DIFFERENCE; NO REFUGEE WANTS TO STAY IN ARGENTINA. HE SAID WHEN GOA AGREED TO CONSIDER SPECIFIC CASES FOR PREPARING RESIDENCY DOCUMENTATION, HE COULD NOT COME UP WITH ONE REFUGEE WHO WAS WILLING TO BE CONSIDERED. HE ALSO SAID THAT THE INCREASINGLY PANICKY REFUGEES ARE COMING TO BUENOS AIRES FROM THE PROVINCES, SEEKING DIRECT UN PROTECTION AND ACCELERATION OF THEIR CASES FOR RESETTLEMENT ABROAD. THE HALLWAY TO THE UNHCR BUENOS AIRES OFFICES IS CROWDED WITH REFUGEES EACH MORNING.

7. UNHCR DIRECTOR TRAVELS TO UNHCR HEADQUARTERS IN GENEVA NEXT WEEK, APPARENTLY TO REVIEW AND EMPHASIZE DETERIORATING REFUGEE SITUATION IN ARGENTINA. WHEN EMBOFF CALLED ON HIM YESTERDAY, HE JUMPED UP, ASKING IF USG HAD FAVORABLE RESPONSE TO AGA KHAN'S APPEAL. HE REPEATED URGENCY OF SITUATION SEVERAL TIME DURING VISIT.
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